The Best Of All Possible Worlds

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The Best Of All Possible Worlds

by TigerPrawn

Summary

"The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears it is true." J. Robert Oppenheimer

A secret experimental device. A means of escape. A new world with a familiar face. Galen Erso is a man displaced who needs to get home.

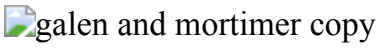
Wrangled into helping. Persuaded by his Hippocratic oath. Held by his fascination. Mortimer Granville is a man on the verge of great things, greater than he could possibly know.

They are both optimistic.

Notes

Ok, so I was only going to do one of my ABO Trope fics for the scifi fest (posting that one later in the week) but then I realised the same actress was in Rogue One (Jyn) and Hysteria (Emily) so my brain sort of spat this out.

Chapter 1



“No Krennic… it was me.” There was no stopping the panic in Galen Erso’s voice as he stepped in front of the scientists. Some - those like himself that were forced to be there and work on this machine of terror - he might call friends. But even those he did not, he could not see killed for his actions. Enough people might already die as a result of his actions if his message never reached Jyn.

He couldn’t dwell on that in this moment. He could only think of the scientists stood before him, accused of his crime - of smuggling a message. His message to his daughter.

The grin on Krennic’s face repulsed him. They had been friends once. Close. Might have been closer still had he not met Lyra, had Jyn, realised what the Empire really was. What he was really doing. They both knew Krennic wouldn’t kill him. Perhaps in part because of that closeness that the Commander seemed oblivious to the loss of, but mostly because he believed Galen to be more indispensable than he truly was.

He did not think the same of the scientists. His grin only widened into something utterly bemused, when he ordered the troopers to move Galen aside. He would kill them, each and all, Galen knew.

His hand flew to his belt and played over the small device there. It had been impossible to test. It was such a risk. And yet he only hesitated for a moment - remembering why he had built this, and many other secret little inventions under the Empire’s very nose - to stop them. These scientists knew enough to be dispensed by the Empire, but of use to the Rebels, especially if his message was unsuccessful.

He had only a moment to react.

Galen turned and grabbed one others. “Hold on.” He nodded his head to them and they instinctively all grabbed for each other. Maybe they were expecting to die together, maybe they were expecting some rebel craft to appear above them and drop ladders. Maybe they had seen enough of his calculations and workings to guess at the last hope any of them had as the wind and rain wiped around them and stormtroopers moved towards them.

His hand found the button, and pressed.

*

Galen rolled to his back.

The world was quiet. Serene. Bright.

He felt the warmth on his face and opened his eyes. The sun was high in the sky, and there green moved between him and the blazing light - as leaves swayed in and out of his view. He tried to move but had no power to do so.

He was unsure where he was and how he had come to be there. He tried to recall the last thing he had done. He recalled years past, painful memories, grief, loneliness, acceptance. But the closer he came to the present was a blur.

“Don’t move.” A gentle and familiar voice spoke. A voice he had not expected to hear.

The sudden thought had him reaching out. His hands found slender arms as they tried to settle him. And then a face came into view.

“Jyn…” he breathed out the name. She looked and sounded so much like Lyra that, despite the years since they had last seen each other, there could be no mistaking it.

“Gin? Are you intoxicated, sir?” She looked concerned. “You are not quite well. I saw you fall, but I don’t smell any alcohol. I know a doctor, just across the square beyond the park. Will you let me take you to him?”

Some of her words made no sense to him, but he found himself nodding anyway. She was here, his darling daughter. How many years had it been? How she had grown.

He let her help him up to his feet and his vision began to clear, no longer blinded by the bright sun above. They were in a park, not any that he recognised, and not quite like any he had either seen or imagined. It wasn’t immediately clear, but there was something not quite right about it. Certainly the benches were of no design he knew - it was all slightly off.

He looked down at Jyn who had ensconced herself against him, propping him up. She wore strange clothes. A pale dress, a matching hat. Lace, frills. Her tastes may have changed, it was something he had rarely seen the like of before - the closest it might remind him of something from a few generations past on Naboo.

“Can you tell me your name sir?” She still looked quite concerned, more so - uncomfortable even - when he tightened the arm around her into a half embrace.

His throat hurt as though he had been thirsty for days, as he forced the words - “Don’t you know your own father Jyn?”

She looked even more concerned and managed to ease out of his grasp a little. “Oh dear, I think maybe you hit your head. Let us get you inside.” She started to lead him across the park towards pale stone houses the other side of black metal rails.

“My name is Emily Dalrymple.” She told him with a smile. “And we can deal with your name once you are feeling better.”

*

Mortimer looked up as Emily stumbled through the door, attempting to keep a man upright.

“What on earth?” He took his hand from the ice bowl he’d been resting it in after a very long morning of treating patients, and went to his fiance’s aid. It was unlike her to act with such impropriety, but certainly it wasn’t unheard of in her family. Had her sister Charlotte arrived in such a manner, he would not have batted an eye.

After he helped lower the man into a chair at the side of the room he turned back to Emily but she spoke before he could ask any questions or offer a stern warning about the inappropriateness of such behaviour.

“I saw him fall, in the park. He stumbled out of nowhere and fell heavily. He seems to be confused, maybe delirious.” She spoke hurriedly but with the zeal of someone making a discovery. He had never seen her quite so animated.

Mortimer looked at the man, who now sat with eyes closed as though against a headache, and then turned a supportive - if a little dismissive - smile on Emily. “I’m not sure your father would approve of you picking up Charlotte’s habit of bringing home waifs and strays.”

Emily smiled sweetly and raised a brow- “that is why I brought him to you and not father.”

Mortimer gave a chuckle and shook his head. In moments like this he really did have a fondness for the girl, beyond their path that seemed set out by her father and societal expectations. He reasoned that they might even be happy together - certainly the prospect was there.

“Will you help him?” Emily asked. Mortimer was surprised by the level of concern in her voice, which must have been clear in his expression because she followed with - “I don’t know why, but… I feel sort of responsible for him. I feel as though I know him in some way and in good conscious I couldn’t leave him prostrate in the park.”

“No, I suppose not.” Mortimer smiled and took one of her hands, giving it a gentle squeeze before turning back to the man. “Help me get him on the examination table and I will see what ails him. If you could then get some water for him to drink?”

Emily’s smile was wide and bright. She nodded and helped maneuver the man, who still kept his eyes shut though he clearly was not sleeping. Once settled on the bed, Emily left the room.

Mortimer watched her go before turning back to the stranger, whose eyes opened as the door clicked shut. There was a pain there that took Mortimer aback. Rich brown eyes open, the man’s face seemed warm, not as severe as his features might suggest. But the pain that his eyes held was something deep but constantly reopened. Mortimer took a breath.

“Are you-”

“Is she gone?” The man’s voice was thick and rough.

“Emily? She’s gone to get you a glass of water.”

“Emily.” He spoke the name tentatively, as though tasting it on his tongue. “She’s not…” He trailed off and his chest hitched.

“You fell sir, can you tell me what happened?” Mortimer asked, concerned as much by the strange behaviour as anything. He started to examine the man, who looked at him ever more strangely as he progressed.

“You’re a doctor?” A note of uncertainty there.

“Well, yes.” Mortimer chuckled. “You’ve caught me between patients. Do you remember falling?”

“I… remember something.” The words were sad and his look was distant.

Mortimer couldn’t find anything immediately obvious that might have caused or been the result of the man’s fall. As he stepped back from the table the man looked at him again as though he was about to say something, but then he stopped himself as the door opened and Emily returned.

He took the glass of water from her with a nod but didn’t drink. Instead he let his head fall back and closed his eyes once more.

“Is he very hurt Mortimer?” Her concern was evident.

“I think… he would perhaps be best under observation for a while.” He spoke as he watched her face change from deep concern to some relief. He couldn’t even begin to fathom why this stranger meant anything to her but he couldn’t bear to see her pout. He turned back to the patient. “Do you live nearby? Are you visiting London?”

The man remained silent until Emily went to his side and lay a gentle hand on his arm. “We’re only trying to help you. Would you please let us?” She was firm but caring.

The man frowned but at least reopened his eyes and fixed them on her. That sadness was there again, but it was soft as he looked at Emily. “I believe… I don’t… I think I am far, far away from home.”

She smiled sympathetically before turning to Mortimer with a determined expression - “he must stay with us, that way you can better treat what ails him and we can make sure he gets home safely.”

“Emily… your father-” Mortimer began to reproach her but she cut him off.

“-my father will give me the moon if I asked for it.” her eyes sparkled with what seemed a new realisation. Not that she was in any way wrong.

“Fathers will do anything for their daughters.” The man’s voice was sad and distant, it struck a cord of hurt through Mortimer.

*

The pain the man was in was clearly not physical. It was something wholly relatable to Mortimer in a way he had found in few people he had encountered - even the Dalrymples, who had lost their mother when they were too young to recall. Because it was the pain of loss. Deeper than that, it was the pain of experiencing that loss in such an overwhelming way that it was daily revisited. Mortimer had understood such a pain as this since the death of his parents. He didn't let himself dwell.

After ascertaining that the man felt well enough to be assisted by Mortimer to a guest room, Emily had excused herself to go and speak with her father. Mortimer had no doubt that she would get what she wanted and he would be glad to do it - more so than for Charlotte who had a constant need. Emily had surely never asked for anything like this before. He wasn't sure Emily had ever asked for anything at all before.

Once to the room, in the upper floors of the house that was also their medical practice, Mortimer helped the man to the bed. Though tall, he was athletic rather than bulky, his muscular form clear beneath his strange clothes and Mortimer's helping hands. They stumbled a little close to the bed. Mortimer was able to regain his balance, but as he settled the man to a seated position and drew back, their faces glided past each other - grey stubble scratching Mortimer's clean shaven jawline. The sensation was not entirely unpleasant, in fact it sent a shiver through the doctor.

"Do you have a name?" Mortimer asked a little flustered, and then shook his head, embarrassed. "Of course you do, I mean, do you recall your name?"

"My name is Galen Erso." He looked around the room and seemed lost. Like a stranger in a new world. He had an accent, perhaps he came from somewhere foreign and this was all new to him. Mortimer moved on from the thought to smile at the name.

"Galen? Just as the Greek physician and philosopher?" Mortimer smiled but the man only looked at him blankly.

Mortimer cleared his throat. "Well, I'm Doctor Granville. Mortimer. You… uh, you can call me Mortimer." He offered a smile but received none in return.

"I don't know where I am or how I got here… You think I'm mad? Insane?" There was a resignation there that hurt.

"No, no, not at all. I think that perhaps you have a head injury. I will sit with you tonight to make sure you there is no change in your condition and then we will consider further in the morning what is to be done." Mortimer gave a reassuring smile, which at least this time was met with a nod.

"I… I appreciate your help. Thank you." There was little feeling behind the words but Mortimer could understand what a difficult situation this might be for the man.

Mortimer started for the door. "First I will ask Molly to bring you something to eat, and I will fetch some pajamas for you." Mortimer took in the man's frame again. They were of a height, but he was much more slender than Galen. He wasn't sure why that thought made his cheeks start to burn - "I, uh… make yourself comfortable."

Mortimer was opening the door, feeling strangely foolish, when Galen asked - “What planet is this, Mortimer?”

“Planet?” Mortimer frowned and turned back to study Galen’s face. The question was clearly serious. “Earth.” He found himself replying in the face of absolute sincerity.

Galen looked thoughtful for a moment and then dropped his head into his hands. “I am so lost.”

Mortimer’s chest ached. Perhaps Galen was mad, or certainly there was a head injury - though he’d found no bump in his examination. Even so, he wanted to go over and comfort the man, hold him and tell him he understood such pain and would help in anyway he could. He swallowed, a nervous feeling crawling over him before turned and left the room.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Mortimer and Galen develop an interest in each other that may be more than scientific.

Chapter Notes

I had hoped to post the final chapter this week, but after each of us being sick on and off since Christmas I've gone down with norovirus and it isn't pretty. The chapter is almost finished, so if I can finish and post it I will but otherwise it will be done as soon as we can catch a break.

Earth.

He had never heard of the planet. From studying the effects in the room, it seemed a backward place. There was no technology that he recognised - not even the basics that were standard on even outer rim planets.

As he sat waiting, Galen considered leaving but realised, his hand on the door handle, that he had nowhere to go. He settled on the bed, quietening his mind to truly think.

He had never heard of this planet, and could remember nothing of his recent past. The last few years, as they grew closer to this day, were a blur in his mind. Up until he was found by Jyn.

Not Jyn. Emily.

He knew now she was not his daughter. And yet, regardless of the years apart of the strange attire he could have sworn to it.

The housemaid came and brought him food and drink. He was otherwise alone until Mortimer returned to the room some time later, clothing in hand. He was dressed more casually - no jacket or necktie, as he'd had before. Galen was struck by how handsome the man was, that in another time or place when the world was less crazy and his mind was clear, the doctor might be enticing.

Mortimer gave a soft smile "I think these might just fit." he handed over the pile of clothing. Silky and already warmed by the man's hands.

Galen nodded his thanks. The softness of the fabric made him realise how stiff and uncomfortable his uniform was.

When he started to unfasten his tunic, the doctor turned away. He might even have been blushing. Modesty was not something Galen had always been afforded in his life though he appreciated Mortimer's concern.

"I can leave if you wish?" Mortimer asked, back turned.

"That isn't necessary." Galen found himself smiling. It had been a long while since he had been around someone who might be shy or demure. He found himself wondering how deep that shyness went. He shook away both the smile and the thought. If this was a different circumstance - but it wasn't. He knew objectively that he only wanted to reach for comfort because of the true circumstances he found himself in.

He was in this unknown place and, wracking his brain, the last thing he could remember for sure was that he had been looking for someone he could trust to smuggle a message to Jyn. Plans? When he tried to focus on the memories they evaporated.

One thing was for sure, he was certain he had not seen his daughter for many years until Emily appeared before him. He would have known that. There was no way he wouldn't have known that.

He pulled on the pajama top, it fit but was snug. Once he removed his pants and pulled on the pajama bottoms he found the same to be true with those. Even so, they were not uncomfortable and the material felt good against his skin. Not the roughness of Imperial issue clothing.

"And what now?" he asked, touching a hand to Mortimer's arm so the man knew he could turn. He did so and Galen noticed a definite blush as the doctor's eyes scanned quickly over him and took in the cut of the clothing.

Mortimer cleared his throat and pointedly looked in his eyes. "I think you should rest. I will remain in observation of you overnight, and then in the morning we can reassess your condition and see where we go from there."

"Why are you helping me like this? I am a stranger to you."

Mortimer smiled. "But Emily is not, and she wishes it. Besides, what sort of doctor would I be to ignore my Hippocratic Oath?"

Galen nodded, though he didn't understand the last part. "You care for Emily very much." he noted and was glad of it, feeling a desire for the girl's happiness as a facsimile of his own.

Mortimer hesitated and his smile faltered a little.

"I'm certainly very fond of her. We are to be married after all." His smile returned.

"Fond?" Galen huffed a laugh, easily - it felt like it hadn't been that easy for a long while. "If I'd spoken of my wife in such terms she wouldn't be very *fond* of me." He paused to watch

the doctor's face drop a little, not enough to lose the polite smile. It felt both strange and good to talk of his wife in such a way - so long ago she had been gone now. He studied the doctor, "Do you not love her?"

Mortimer cleared his throat and his cheeks coloured a little. "Well, that is… It's not really your concern, is it?" And even so, when Galen didn't reply, Mortimer continued, the words falling out in a hurry - "I'm sure love will come later. We are perfectly matched - our dispositions, our stations in life, her father is a doctor, I am a doctor. We suit each other well."

Galen found it remarkable. Perhaps this planet had strange and backward customs as well as a lack of any decent technology. It did nothing to make his smile falter, so preposterous was the notion of marrying without love. Perhaps it was an overreaction really. Perhaps he was considering whether this man was good enough for his daughter. Despite the fact that Emily was not Jyn.

He just huffed as a final word on the matter and Mortimer looked relieved to know the subject had been dropped.

It was a short while later, after a longer conversation about the sort of medicine Mortimer was experienced at practicing - a lot of it a far cry from anything in Galen's experience - that Galen retired. He felt heavy, weary. Exhaustion rolled over him as he finally took to the bed with Mortimer watching over him in the chair to his side.

*

The lights came on and on, rushing past him as though he were speeding through hyperspace. Not lights then, stars. A journey taking him so far from home. And yet, towards it at the same time it seemed. Jyn appeared before him, smiling.

Her smile slowly faded. A light was growing. He had stopped moving, the light was coming towards him - a brilliant and intense flame like being engulfed by the sun. It took Jyn - consumed her as she screamed. Where she fell he could see beyond her - a city dying. Exploding and imploding at various points - a mass destruction that he had never before seen.

Just before he woke screaming he could make out that the city was Jedha.

*

Mortimer was startled awake. Shocked at first, for the fact that he had nodded off. But that gave way to the urgency of action, as Galen sat bolt upright in the bed, screaming. His eyes were unseeing. His whole body drenched with sweat.

Mortimer thought to prepare something for him, but decided first to try and calm the man. He clutched his shoulders and eased him back down. As he did Galen seemed to lose what fight had been in him. He went quiet and slack all but for his own hands that had grasped at Mortimer and now held him tight. Once Galen stilled, Mortimer tried to extricate himself but was unable - the man stirring a little but never waking and his firm grip never lessening.

He managed to sit, though not comfortably, once more in the chair but leaning over the bed. He would have to wait out the grip unless he wanted to wake the man.

*

Galen woke and felt comforted by the weight that half covered him. It had been a while since he had felt the weight of another against him. It took him a moment to remember his whereabouts and circumstance. It must be the doctor that was all but embracing him, leaning over from the chair at his bedside and face pressed to Galen's neck.

He should wake the man, of course, and he would. But even so he gave into the temptation and moved so that his face pressed against flesh. He sighed at the contact. At the smell of the man, clean but musky. It had been a very long time since he had encountered such enthralling beauty. Longer still since he had cared to pay attention to anything beautiful.

He knew that much, remembered enough of the long past. He had to wonder if he would be thinking the same if he could remember something more recent, more than the cold of his quarters that were little more than a prison. Did it matter? It should perhaps. Now was certainly not the time or place to get lost to such thoughts.

Yes. Another time and place perhaps.

Mortimer stirred and Galen stilled, feeling suddenly intrusive. He closed his eyes and hoped that the doctor presumed him to be asleep when he jerked back suddenly. There was a sharp intake of breath as the doctor clearly realised the situation. Then it was expelled in something like relief as Mortimer must presume him sleeping.

There was shuffling and then steps, a door opening and closing. And then he was alone.

*

Mortimer splashed water on his face and tried not to think about the start to his morning.

He was fond of Emily. Love would follow. That was how these things worked.

Though he wasn't sure why he was reminding himself of this.

He clenched his jaw as he remembered what it felt like to wake against the strange man in his charge. He'd had past flirtations with local ladies, in college, but they had never gone further than furtive touches and a stolen kiss here and there. He wasn't sure if it was propriety that held him back or something else. The same something else that had made him blush when Edmund teased him on a night out - after Mortimer had declined a sexual favour from a young woman of ill repute - that perhaps she had the wrong parts for his proclivities.

Mortimer shook the thought away and patted his face dry on his towel.

It's alright for someone as wealthy as Edmund to be so inclined. The thought shocked him and pulse raced for a moment. This was just all too silly to contemplate, and yet several hours later he was still unable to think of much beyond how it felt to be pressed against Galen Erso.

*

Emily brought him lunch in place of the maid. It was the first time he had seen her since his arrival and she apologised for it. She looked harried but excited. She explained that finding him had given her a fresh perspective on the work of her sister, Charlotte, and she had been visiting with her.

Galen found himself unable to speak in her presence. It caused a tightness in his throat and was afraid that if he opened his mouth nothing but a sob would come forth. She didn't appear to take it as rudeness, smiling sympathetically instead.

He wondered where Jyn was. As he had every day since their separation. But more - he wondered if she were like Emily. Good hearted.

Her smile pained him as much as it warmed him and she seemed to sense his discomfort and took her leave.

He was alone a while longer then until Mortimer joined him as the sun started to go down. The doctor looked distracted and pale. Preoccupied. Nervous. But he also looked in pain and was clearly favouring his wrist.

"Are you well Mortimer?" He asked, and that made the doctor jump a little, as though he had expected them to remain in silence.

"Quite." Was the curt reply, and then a forced polite smile before he started to pace the room. "I think it's safe to assume that whatever ails you has you in no immediate danger. The brain is a complex organ, perhaps your memories will return over time. There's no real way to tell."

Galen nodded and waited because Mortimer seemed like he had more to say. The doctor fidgeted for a moment and wouldn't meet his eye.

"And that said." Mortimer began again, abruptly "I simply cannot justify keeping you here. Of course, we wouldn't see you out on the streets. There are, um, places, for people who… um." it was as though he ran out of steam, leaving Galen to cock his head quizzically.

After a few moment's silence where Mortimer looked at his feet with something that wasn't quite guilt, Galen decided to spare the man.

"Of course. I will go. You and Emily will always have my thanks for your kindness." It felt the right thing to do, it really wasn't in him to impose. And anything was better than what he could remember of before - despite there often being luxuries, it was cold, hard and spartan. Essentially a prisoner. Guarded and overseen. Moved when required. No free will.

He had no possessions to take he realised, but he looked about him anyway before heading towards the door. "Perhaps, you could give me directions of where I should go? I can fend for myself from there."

He was surprised when Mortimer moved quickly to him, arm reached out until his hand was on Galen's arm.

"Wait." The doctor's voice quivered.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Mortimer and Galen become closer as they work to get Galen home. But will they be able to say goodbye (the answer is clearly -no, no they really can't)

Wait.

Mortimer wasn't sure why he'd been unable to let the man leave. A professional curiosity, he told himself. But that only held for so long. It wasn't as if he specialised in head injuries, disorders of the mind, amnesia - or anything else he might claim an interest in other than the man himself. And that was surely his interest. He wasn't sure why, but he found Galen captivating.

At first, Galen had asked lots of questions, and although it was clear he took time over framing them just right, it was also clear that he asked because he had no knowledge of the answer. It was strange that he seemed so secretive about this gap considering his amnesia was known. A quirk then. One of many. As how the man's intelligence and knowledge was dazzling, and yet such simple things as how the sash windows opened eluded him.

Then there were the nightmares - if they could be called a quirk - they were frequent. But they didn't seem to affect Galen during the day, as though he didn't quite remember them, or perhaps was calmed enough to endure. He always seemed calmed when Mortimer would lay in the bed with him, hold him or be held and let sleep return.

"Wait." A strong hand had pulled him close the first time he had gone to check on Galen during a nightmare. The first time since they moved to Edmund's place in rooms next to each other. He had been about to leave once Galen had settled, though it turned out the man had awoke. He didn't resist, letting himself be enveloped into an embrace. He'd listened to Galen's breathing slow, and then even out, and then it was replaced with a gentle snore - soon joined by his own.

That had been a week after they had moved in with Edmund. Three weeks after they had met, and it was now three weeks since. How life could change in such a short time.

It had all started with Emily.

She became very quickly like a woman unknown to him, so changed was she by her encounter with Galen. It had taken him a couple of days to warm to her it seemed, but then they spent a lot of time together talking of subjects from the composition of the sun, to the importance of doing what was right and good. Or so it seemed to Mortimer. He could barely keep up with their exchanges on the few breaks he had from his clinic.

And then, in short order, Emily had decided that her life was not to be lived by her father but for what she felt was right and good. Which turned out to be her taking up Charlotte's cause. Which further resulted in her deciding Mortimer wasn't really the man for her but for the girl her father wished her to be. Mortimer couldn't even begin to argue it because - as dominoes fall - a few days later, commiserating with Edmund and nursing an ever sore hand from the repetitive strain of his wrist, they happened upon an idea - an invention. With Edmund's connections they had a patent by the end of the week.

By the end of a fortnight Doctor Dalrymple, perhaps a little perturbed by an invention that looked likely to put him out of work, had plans to close his practice in order to help Emily and Charlotte. Who he now gave full support to since they had joined forces - it remained true that Emily would always get anything for which she asked.

This had left Mortimer with no fiance, no job and no home. However, he did have a would-be patient in tow, and an accommodating best friend and now business partner… in a house full of trinkets.

*

Mortimer had lost count of the amount of nights he had woken in Galen's bed, a heavy arm draped over him, having gone to comfort the man during a nightmare. During the day Galen did not speak of it, though they talked of everything else: medicine; science; books; customs and traditions. The man seemed keen to know all there was to know about England, and about Mortimer himself bit by bit. And though Mortimer returned the curiosity and questions, there were many unanswered. And not always, he felt, from the amnesia. Some it seemed as though Galen had the answer but did not share it. Mortimer might have been wary with anyone else, but he found himself to be a good judge of character and Galen was… good. Fiercely intelligent, witty, and above all *good*. But more - there was a sadness in him he seemed unwilling to share with Mortimer and the doctor respected that distance as a new acquaintance. But it didn't stop him wanting to offer what little he could - comfort.

For the man's comfort. He'd tried to assure himself in the beginning. To be a good doctor. A jobless doctor who had nothing more to do than care for this one patient who needed so little from him. It wasn't as if there was a physical ailment that Mortimer could assist with - heal and move on. What could he offer this patient other than consideration and comfort?

Was it wrong that he took comfort in it too?

Galen stirred and Mortimer held his breath, only letting it out when Galen's arm snaked around his chest and pulled him back against him. It felt so good to be held this way, and he wondered if that should cause him concern, but it didn't. He sighed and sank back into the embrace.

He was held tight for ten minutes or so until Galen finally woke completely and released him, as always, with an apology. Mortimer rose from the bed, gave a small to dismiss the apology, but not trusting himself to speak.

He returned to his own room, where he washed and dressed before seeking out Edmund and the sense of normality that came with that. A grounding back in the reality of the house and

that friendship and history, and not the strange altered state that he felt around Galen.

He finally found Edmund in the room he called the trinkets room or his workshop, though it had once been a sitting room. It was full of Edmund's little inventions and now the whole large table was taken up with several versions of their electromechanical vibrating medical device - which Edmund had rather vulgarly termed the "Jolly Molly".

"You look… well…" Edmund appraised him as he approached the man, sitting behind the table with tools in his hands. "Why, Mortimer, do you daily look ever a mixture of confusion and elation? It perplexes me."

Mortimer tried for a dismissive smile, but wasn't sure he quite managed it. "I am jobless and homeless Edmund, what are your expectations of me?"

"Pish!" Edmund dismissed the words with a wave of his hand. "What do you call this if not employment, Doctor?" He waved parts of a device at Mortimer. "Besides, I don't believe at all that to be your problem. Galen is your problem."

"What do you mean?" Mortimer asked sharply. "His amnesia-"

"Oh! Forget his amnesia. I'm talking about the fact that-" Edmund's interruption was interrupted by Galen entering the room. He was wearing clothes that Edmund had sent out for, having taken an instant dislike to the *greyest of grey monstrosities* he deemed Galen's own clothes to be.

Mortimer swallowed. Smart trousers and shirt, a tie… but no waistcoat or jacket and the sleeves were rolled up to the elbow. He found he was biting into his lower lip as he studied Galen's arms, more closely and much longer than anyone should. When he looked up Galen met his gaze with a fond smile that, if anything, reassured Mortimer that his glance had been noticed but was not a problem.

Edmund, dramatically, dropped the machine he was tinkering with and sighed loudly. "Yes, all quite perplexing."

"A problem?" Galen looked over at the items Edmund was working on.

"Of sorts." Was Edmund's terse reply and Mortimer gave him a withering look, before turning to Galen.

"How do you feel today?"

"Much the same doctor." Galen smiled softly, picking up one of Edmund's trinkets from the sideboard next to him. He turned it over in his hand, but his eyes stayed on Mortimer. "I wonder… if I might speak with you privately?"

"Of course." Mortimer answered. A shiver of excitement ran through him that he decided not to dissect at that moment.

*

Galen placed down the strange machinery he had been handling and went to his room, Mortimer following behind him. Once inside, Mortimer shut the door as Galen turned to look at him. The doctor seemed on edge, nervous anticipation coming off him in waves. Galen tried to ignore it, and his presumed reasoning for it.

“We are both men of science Mortimer, and I hope you know me well enough to understand that I…” he hesitated over the words because madmen were the loudest to claim sanity. “I’m not insane.”

Mortimer broke into a fond smile at that. “I don’t think you’re insane, Galen. You can… you don’t have to be afraid of saying anything to me.” His words were sincere and sort of hopeful.

Galen let out a heavy breath. “I need to tell you this, even if you don’t believe me or you do think me mad. I…” he kept his eyes on Mortimer to gauge the reaction. “You know I am not from here, from this place? My home is… very distant from here. And I… I need you to believe me. I came here with use of a device I built, a machine.” He went to the bedside table and picked up the device, it fit in his palm now that it was no longer attached to his discarded belt. “To get home I need to fix it - some parts are burned out but I think I can find replacements amongst Edmund’s trinkets.” He turned back to Mortimer. “Will you help me get home?”

Mortimer looked stricken, nodding despite his face betraying a deep sadness. “Of course.” he rasped before clearing his throat. “I won’t pretend I understand or that I don’t need further explanation, but of course I will help you, if that is what you want. To go home.” Galen could feel the focus there. Mortimer didn’t seem to care about the strangeness of his request, only that it would mean his leaving. That sent an ache through his chest.

Galen nodded. “I must. I have… responsibilities. My daughter…” For a moment his heart thud heavily, the look on Mortimer’s face conveyed something he hadn’t expected to see - or maybe he had just hoped he wouldn’t.

“Of course.” Mortimer agreed. “Well, yes… you must let me know what I can do to help.” Mortimer agreed even as he backed towards the door and then let himself out with no backward glance.

Mortimer didn’t want him to go. His heart ached.

*

It wasn’t until they had been working on the device for a fortnight that Galen ventured a question Mortimer hadn’t expected.

“Do you miss Emily?” Galen hadn’t looked up. The question almost matter of fact.

Truth was, he rarely thought about her. He was glad to hear news of the work she and her sister had undertaken, and that she was well. But beyond that, he couldn’t think of her. The place she was supposed to have occupied within him, she never did, and now…

“No. Not really. I… Perhaps I might have missed the companionship she brought, if I did not live with friends.” he smiled and let go of the spark of hope that had ignited during the short exchange. In a small amount of time he had realised the feelings that Galen had inspired in him were seen and not returned. Even Edmund had given up rolling his eyes at them.

For the best perhaps. It wasn’t the done thing. And Galen would be leaving.

And yet… as Mortimer pushed his sleeves further up and loosened his tie for comfort, he caught Galen watching him. And there was something there, he was sure. Before it was gone again. Replaced by determination and a little sadness.

*

Galen cried out as he sat up in the bed, panting. Skin crawling in a cold shiver. The same dream of Jyn dying. He let out a short, low, sob - over which he didn’t hear his door opening.

“Are you well?” Mortimer’s voice was laced with such concern it made his chest ache.

“I… a bad dream.” He stammered.

Mortimer made his way across in the half light as he had so many times before. And each time the same - he would check him over, ask practical and medical questions, go to leave and Galen would ask him to stay. Mortimer would oblige. He would always stay and lay there next to him. Sometimes they would talk until they drifted to sleep, sometimes not. They would always wake somehow entangled.

In some ways it made the dreams worth it, as terrible as they were. They were only dreams, they could not harm him. But Mortimer next to him, that was real. There was nothing more real.

“Galen?” Mortimer’s hand went to his forehead and Galen sank into the cold press of it. He should send him away. If he hadn’t come here Mortimer would have been happy, living the life he was meant to with Emily. They would have found love eventually - that seemed to be the way of things here. Now when he left, Mortimer would be alone, as Galen had been since Lyra and Jyn had been taken from him.

The devise was almost finished. A month to modify the components he had managed to acquire or make in Edmund’s workshop was all it had taken even on this primitive world. Soon he would be able to reset the programme and return to his own place in the universe.

He had postulated that the device might work something like a self-contained wormhole. And now he pondered on a new theory - multiple universes or something close to that. That perhaps he had come here because of Emily. Perhaps she and Jyn shared something more than the superficial. If he had been thinking of Jyn when he operated the device and it had drawn him here, perhaps it could draw him back to Jyn. Perhaps it was the force - it worked in ways beyond the reach of science. Those thoughts filled his mind daily.

But right now his mind was filled only with Mortimer.

He took the hand from his head and pulled it down to his mouth. Mortimer's breath audibly hitched as he pressed his lips gently to the back of his hand.

"Stay with me tonight?" Galen muttered against skin without looking up. He knew Mortimer felt the same as he did, saw it in his eyes every day. He had kept him at arm's reach - knowing that he must leave. But even so, he had to let them have this - let them have each other.

Mortimer released a sigh and breathlessly replied "You know I always will."

*

The trepidation Mortimer felt was quickly replaced by a pooling desire. Galen would be gone soon, this was a bad idea - they shouldn't become this close only to be parted. And yet, Galen's fingers moved deftly over the buttons of his shirt and pushed the silk off Mortimer's shoulders. It fell to the ground as rough fingers ran over his chest and down to his abdomen before slipping under the waistband of his pajama trousers and pulling him to the bed.

Mortimer went gladly, allowing himself to be pulled and positioned until Galen lay back with Mortimer over him. His hands coming up to frame Mortimer's face.

"I… I will miss you." Galen's voice was rough with emotion. Mortimer had no time to reply as Galen drew his face down until their lips pressed together. His stubble was rough and scratched against Mortimer's face, the sensation drawing a moan that opened his mouth to Galen.

If this was it, if this was all he was allowed - to know that those feelings he had were perhaps returned, to build this memory of Galen. That was enough. It would have to be enough. The sadness that came with this was unable to find purchase as his mind filled with the sensation of being touched. Of Galen's hands moving down, stroking his sides and back as they descended to his waistband once more and began to draw them down. Just enough to expose his rump, which Galen then squeezed.

Mortimer yelped at the unfamiliar touch, breaking the kiss and bringing forth a chuckle from Galen. There was a glint in the man's eyes a moment before Galen rolled them and drew back from him. He moved back enough to pull off and discard Mortimer's trousers before settling between his legs, looking down with a wide-eyed adoration.

"You are…" words seemed to fail him as he looked down at Mortimer's naked body. Mortimer blushed, and yet, he didn't feel shy or vulnerable being laid out, nude and hard. If anything, his focus, his want, was to see Galen nude as himself. But before he could reach up to pull at the man's clothes, he sank his mouth down onto Mortimer - taking his length into an unfamiliar but welcome, wet heat.

Mortimer let out a cry and arched off the bed in response, Galen's hands coming to his hips to steady him as the man's mouth worked him. He felt like his nerve endings might burst as Galen sucked and teased with his tongue. It wasn't a way Mortimer had ever been touched before and he wasn't sure he was going to last much longer.

His hand shot into Galen's hair. "Wait, stop… I… I'll…"

Galen drew his mouth up slowly and let Mortimer slip from it, his lips still against flesh as he smiled. "I want you to… I… I've wanted to taste you for so long, please…"

Mortimer was somewhere between aroused and mortified. Did Galen mean to… have Mortimer… in his mouth… to swallow...?

And yet he found himself nodding and Galen resumed. With every suck, with every lick, Mortimer edged closer. He looked down at Galen and could see his head bobbing, one hand on his hip and the other had strayed down to Galen's own erection, pulled free of his trousers. The sight of the man pleasuring them both at the same time was just a little too much, and he felt his orgasm swell and explode before he even had chance to warn Galen.

He let out a cry of ecstasy as his semen pumped into Galen's mouth. And Galen swallowed it down with a moan of pleasure, sucking still - taking everything Mortimer had. Galen finally drew back until he was kneeling, his hand still working his own erection until he let out a strangled cry and ejaculated. Mortimer felt the hot wet fluid land on his leg and laughed.

"I… I have been… wanting this for so long, I never really considered the practicalities." He was laughing at himself as he blushed.

Galen smiled and let out a low sigh before crawling up the bed and laying over him. "I can teach you the practicalities if you stay with me tonight." Galen's smile was adoring and hopeful.

Mortimer nodded and answered quietly - "I will stay every night if you'll let me."

*

Galen's heart missed a beat when Mortimer looked up and smiled at him as he handed over a the pot of small screws. He could have finished the device days ago but he had been putting it off for that smile. For the six nights Mortimer had spent in his bed. Sometimes they just talked and held each other - openly now, no need for polite avoidance. Last night they had done much more than talk - he had straddled Mortimer so that they pressed together and took them both in hand. They had cum together and laughed at the mess they had made on Mortimer's chest. It was easy, light. It was the sort of feeling he hadn't had in a long time.

And yet, in the harsh light of day, even with that smile turned on him, Galen wondered at this mistake he had made. Leaving before would have been hard, but now it would rip their hearts out and leave them both bereft.

"... I said, shall I have some tea brought up?" Mortimer's hand touched his when he spoke and Galen nodded with a smile in response.

He shook the thoughts away and resumed his work. Perhaps it would be better to go sooner rather than later. How much harder it would be if he continued to delay like this.

He looked down at the device and wondered if it would work at all. As before there could be no testing, only action. The circuits had all appeared in working condition, it was just that connections to the tiny kyber crystal shard that powered it, had burned out. Only the delicate nature and clumsy tools of this place had made the job longer than it would have been back home.

He screwed the panel back onto the device and placed in front of him on the worktop. Complete.

Tomorrow then? Quick and as painless as possible.

He would press the button and hope for the best. Accept the dangers that came with it and risk losing everything in this world and the one he hoped to find, on a chance. What would happen, would happen. If there was one thing he knew it was that the force made science unpredictable and devoid of absolutes.

Mortimer rang the bell for the maid and then came back to the workbench, another smile for him, one that warmed Galen through.

“Tomorrow.” He forced himself to say. “It’s… I shouldn’t put this off any longer. I…” he wanted to apologise, to admit that it had been cruel of him to be so weak and give into his want for Mortimer when he was never going to stay. But Mortimer stepped to him with a sad smile and a gentle hand to the side of his face. The doctor nodded his understanding and pressed a soft kiss to his lips.

*

In the week since they had become intimate, Mortimer had learned a great deal about the human body that, as a doctor, he was somewhat amused to have not known before. He had never considered before the ways in which men could find pleasure together but he knew he liked it. He liked the firm strength of Galen’s body, his weight against him. He couldn’t imagine it would ever be like this with a woman.

He tried to see it as education then. Galen might be leaving but his lessons were burned into Mortimer’s mind so that he knew now, his proclivities as Edmund had said. That was something, a gift that Mortimer had never known he might need. From a man who he had never imagined he might meet.

And yet.

He let out a shaky sigh that threatened to turn into a sob.

“He is leaving then?” Edmund’s voice broke into Mortimer’s thoughts.

They both stood in the foyer - Mortimer about to alight the stairs to Galen’s room, and Edmund, dressed in finery, heading for the nightlife beyond the front door.

“Tomorrow.” Mortimer managed, a pain stabbing in his chest as he admitted it.

Edmund nodded. “Well, for my part I will miss the strange fellow. Nice to have such a bright man around the house, and his tinkering has been fascinating to watch.”

They had, at Mortimer’s urging, told Edmund Galen’s tale of his home and his attempt to return. He wasn’t sure whether Edmund truly believed it, but he was so taken by the fantastical nature of it that he declared it to be riotous fun and that he would of course donate all and any parts and pieces that were required.

Edmund’s hand was on his shoulder then, squeezing it gently. “There, there my boy. Your first love is always the hardest to overcome, but you shall endure - stiff upper lip and all that.”

Love.

Was this love? He had known Emily some months and had never felt… Didn’t love come later? How could he love Galen, they had barely known each other weeks.

“Oh Mortimer.” Edmund sighed softly, and Mortimer realised he was receiving a gentle but pitying look. “How are you so often just the boy I knew?” Another sigh and the smile turned wolfish. “I think you’d better get up there and at the least enjoy the best of send offs.”

He pushed Mortimer to the stairs and slapped his back for encouragement. Mortimer was just at the first step, and Edmund at the door, when his friend turned and said - “Dear boy, you do know he loves you too, don’t you?”

Mortimer’s blood stilled within him and his chest ached. He turned back to the soft and encouraging smile Edmund gave.

Did he know that? Yes… he had always known that, hadn’t he?

Mortimer gave a curt nod but didn’t dare speak for fear of the sob that might break out.

Edmund smiled knowingly and opened the door. “Perhaps you ought speak of these things.” And then he was gone.

Mortimer, hand on the banister to steady himself, took a breath. No they wouldn’t speak of these things. He couldn’t tell Galen he loved him just to lose the man. Because he knew that hearing those words himself would rip his heart out. It was best to remain unspoken.

*

Galen had bathed, in such a fashion as they did things here - which was not something he would miss. He had brushed his hair back and trimmed his beard a little. His uniform was laid out on the ottoman, ready for the morning, but for now he had only a towel around his waist. He wasn’t usually one for a great deal of preening, years living and working as a farmer had put pay to any desire he might have to polish up his appearance. It was to look presentable, he told himself, for his return. But he knew the lie of it. He wanted to look his best for Mortimer.

There was a light knock, despite the fact that they shared only this room now, and then his door opened to reveal Mortimer. The smile he received told him his efforts had been noticed and appreciated and something in that made his chest swell. It reminded him of when he had been an available young man. But he wasn't young now, and this wasn't going to go anywhere. This just was. The thought pained him and he knew his smile faltered because Mortimer's did too.

Mortimer crossed the room quickly, closing the distance between them. His hands gently cupped Galen's face and a chaste kiss was pressed to his lips before Mortimer took in his eyes. He wondered if his own held as much sadness as the doctor's did.

Mortimer looked down, breaking the gaze and letting out a shaky breath. His hands went with him, trailing down Galen's chest and abdomen until the reached the towel. His cock started to fill at the touch and his breathing faltered.

"I…" Mortimer seemed unable to speak and instead dropped to his knees before him. He gently tugged the towel free and then nuzzled into Galen's flesh, pressing his face to his thigh and against the side of his growing length. Galen closed his eyes and let his head drop back. Mortimer had wanted to learn how they could please each other and he had been an adept student. Curious doctor that he was. Galen's hand went to Mortimer's hair as he continued to nuzzle against him, kissing and licking but never taking him into his mouth.

Galen was unsure how much time had passed when Mortimer drew back from his teasing, sitting on his haunches and looking up at him. "I…" Mortimer was blushing and Galen wanted nothing more in that moment than to kiss him. "I want you to have me… the way you let me have you the other night. I want to feel you…" his words faltered into the blush and Galen studied him.

He could still remember the feel of Mortimer inside him, how gentle the Doctor had been. How eager he was and how well he had brought Galen to his own climax despite his inexperience. A fast learner where anatomy was concerned it would seem.

Galen reached down and took Mortimer's hands, pulling him to his feet and into a passionate embrace, their mouths meeting hungrily. He had walked them back towards the bed before Mortimer broke the kiss. He stepped back, panting as he removed his tie and started to unbutton his shirt.

"I want you to make love to me Galen." his words were confident if only little more than a whisper.

Galen took in a shaky breath and nodded, his own hands finding the fastenings on Mortimer's trousers. They both stripped the trousers off, fumbling against each other in their eagerness until Mortimer was left naked but for the unbuttoned shirt. He chuckled and it damn near broke something inside Galen. He pulled the doctor into another kiss and maneuvered him onto the bed before drawing back.

The condoms here, that Mortimer had procured a few days earlier, were primitive, and the lubrication was scented and Galen was sure Mortimer had made it himself in part using the

oils he had in his practice. All these were but fleeting thoughts as he looked over the items on the nightstand, his brain slowly being consumed by the idea of having Mortimer.

“Galen?” Mortimer looked to him. He had laid himself out on the bed, shirt billowed around his arms and torso, he looked like some sort of angel, like those in the myths of the Moons of Lego. “How…”

He had laid on his back when Mortimer had taken him, able to see the doctor’s beautiful face as they found their mutual bliss. But it wasn’t something new to him as it was the doctor, and he wanted it to be comfortable.

“Will you… if you lay on your stomach it will be better for your first time.” Galen said softly.

Mortimer nodded with a bashful smile and rolled to his belly, shrugging out of the shirt as he went. The sight of him was tantalising. Galen took his own cock in hand and stroked it twice and then squeezed it, trying to hold off the inevitable.

He moved onto the bed, settling behind Mortimer and placing a condom and a vial of lubricant next to him. He moved so that Mortimer spread his thighs and Galen sat between them, his hands running over the strong muscular limbs. They worked up to Mortimer’s hips and gently guided him back so that the man was on his knees, head down in his crossed arms. His cock hung heavy and leaking between his legs, and the sight made Galen’s breath hitch.

He swallowed and stroked a finger down the crack of Mortimer’s ass and over his entrance. “May I kiss you here?” the question came out as a rasp, and Mortimer’s responding “yes” was little more than breath.

He ran his tongue over Mortimer’s hole and the doctor jumped forward at the sensation. He settled back again and Galen took hold of his hips to steady him before leaning in again, running his tongue over and around Mortimer until the doctor was squirming and the new and intoxicating sensation.

“Galen, uhhn… I think I might…” Mortimer went to reach for himself and Galen drew back.

“Don’t cum. It will tighten the muscles… you need to relax.” Galen ran soothing hands over Mortimer’s thighs and took up the lube. He spilled it onto his fingers and poured some directly onto Mortimer, receiving a low moan in response. The moan turned to a gasp as Galen replaced his tongue with fingers, circling and teasing and finally pushing one inside.

Mortimer gasped again and Galen felt the doctor hold himself steady from moving forward, felt the press back on his finger. He took a steadying breath and started to work his finger in an out of Mortimer.

“Oh… that… I didn’t know it would feel so… it’s so…” his words trailed into another moan and he buried his face completely in his crossed arms.

“It may get a little uncomfortable, but I will be gentle.” Galen told him as he pressed another finger in and Mortimer gasped again. The room was filled with gasps, moans and the scent of

the lubricant and their mixed musk as Galen worked in the second and a third finger, taking his time to gently ease Mortimer open for him.

Sweat glistened along the doctor's back, pooling at the base of his spine where he arched. "Galen… I need you… soon… or I'll… I'm close."

Galen withdrew his fingers and fumbled on the unfamiliar condom, pouring more lube over Mortimer and stroking it up and down himself before he kneeled behind Mortimer and started to push in.

"Oh god." Mortimer cried and tensed slightly, before relaxing into the press - allowing Galen to inch in bit by bit, draw back and inch in further each time until he was completely seated with Mortimer. The feel of the tight heat around him had Galen already close. He stilled himself for a moment. Neither of them were going to last in this, but he didn't want to cum on the first thrust. He took a breath and kneaded his hands at Mortimer's hips.

Finally he began to move, gentle and languid thrusts that had Mortimer squirming beneath him. Galen reached a hand down to Mortimer's cock only to have it batted away.

"Don't… too close…" Mortimer panted out. Just the idea of it brought him back to the edge of his own climax. He wanted Mortimer to cum, wanted him to enjoy this.

He draped himself over the doctor, pressing to the sweat of his back as he angled his thrusts until Mortimer cried out once he found the sweet angle he had been looking for. Galen smiled and kept the angle as he continued. Each thrust was met with gasps and sobs until Mortimer's hands were scrambling at the sheets.

Galen felt his own climax building, pooling within him. He thrust to that end and as he felt it rearing he took Mortimer's swollen and leaking cock in hand and stroked once, twice. And with that Mortimer spilled onto the bed with a cry, his muscles clenching around Galen so that he too spilled - thrusting through his orgasm until he had released all he had into Mortimer.

He felt Mortimer shaking beneath him where he tried to remain on his knees, and took hold of his hips again. "Wait a moment." Knowing that withdrawing whilst still hard might be uncomfortable.

They breathed together, panting, as Galen softened inside Mortimer. He held the condom in place as he eased out. And then Mortimer crumbled to the bed. He moved off and disposed of the condom before returning to the bed, Mortimer now on his back pulling him down to lie on top of him.

"That… I…" Mortimer seemed unable to form words. But he could see it all in his eyes - the love. The want. That as with himself, a part of Mortimer was going to die tomorrow when he left.

*

A dream swirled inside Galen. One that seemed more like memories. When he woke it was fresh in his mind.

And the fog began to lift. He had flashes of what had happened. How he had taken the scientists too and they had all spun, holding onto each other as they felt their bodies being pulled apart inside. And then one by one, they had lost their grips and been separated. Galen remembered being alone. It felt like he rushed through a void. He could remember travelling through space - or so it seemed. His body being pulled along as the stars rushed by like travelling at lightspeed. The more he focused on it the harder it was to recall details and he was unsure if any of it were truly real or imagined.

Then Mortimer, curled against him, stirred. The joy he took in that was short lived as he remembered that today he would leave him behind.

They rose and dressed in near silence, though there were gentle touches between them and Mortimer helped fasten his uniform then looked at him wryly once he was dressed.

“I don’t think that outfit suits you much.” Mortimer smiled softly as he said it.

When they went to the sitting room where the device lay with other machinery strewn about the place, Edmund was waiting. He appeared dressed for an evening out and dishevelled and his smile towards them both was soft, almost commiserating.

They had planned to return to the park where Emily had found him, an open space was for the best and perhaps that place held some significance other than it being where Emily had been. All three of them were silent as they packed up what they needed.

*

“Not a bother officer. Do give my best to the Chief.” Edmund waved off the policeman who had questioned their setting up strange devices in the park with no permit. Money and connections went a long way to getting your own way, Mortimer reflected.

Edmund had set up his recording equipment, wanting to capture in both photograph and scientific measurement, the results of what was to occur.

Mortimer wrung his hands together as Galen and Edmund talked over the specifics and Edmund moved the camera back and forth to decide on the positioning.

He was almost relieved to have a distraction when he saw Emily approaching.

“Emily. I’m glad to see you.” Mortimer greeted her. He had sent her a note the previous day and had hoped she would come. She smiled and it warmed him like an old friend.

“Good to see you.” she replied and they shook hands with a smile. “I'm glad you sent word, I would have hated for Galen to leave without chance to say goodbye.” she looked thoughtful and a little sad as she glanced at the man. “I cannot truly put words to how much my life has changed thanks to Galen. I owe him a debt I can never repay.”

Mortimer felt like his chest was in a vice as he nodded his understanding. She gave him a quizzical look then, as though she saw something there.

“Emily.” Galen had seen them and come over, they shook hands warmly and then Emily leaned in and kissed his cheek as she might her own father.

“It pains me to see you go. But I hope you find your daughter.” there were tears in her eyes as she said it and Mortimer wondered at the sort of things they may have discussed in the long conversations they'd had before they'd all separated.

He gave a smile and a nod before looking to Mortimer.

“It is time.”

Mortimer felt his heart race and a feeling of dread rise within him. He wasn't sure he could let Galen go. He flexed his hands at his side and stopped himself from reaching out. He wanted to beg him to stay but couldn't be that selfish.

Edmund was at his side then, a reassuring hand on his shoulder. It was the only thing that stopped Mortimer moving forward. They had said their goodbyes the night before and that morning. He wouldn't cause a scene and share what was between them for everyone to see. It felt too important and too real to tarnish by making it no more than the subject of idle gossip of the few passers by.

Galen shook Edmund’s free hand and then looked at Mortimer. The same want there. But he stepped back, into the area they had cleared for the purpose.

His hand lingered on his belt, next to the device. He had to press the button. He had to leave, Mortimer knew. He couldn't stay. He had to find his daughter, he had to finish the mission he had started. Mortimer couldn't ask him to stay. Even he had nothing here really, no job, no fiance. He had Edmund and Edmund had the passion for their invention that he didn't have. How could he ask Galen to give everything up for that? For nothing.

Mortimer’s heart raced and Galen’s hand moved.

“Wait!” Mortimer cried as he pressed the button.

And then he was pulling free from Edmund, the hand releasing him with no fight. He stumbled forward. It was as though the air were distorting around Galen and Mortimer stepped through it without a thought. He clutched at the man, wrapped himself around him.

As he looked back through the rippling air he saw Emily clap her hands to her mouth, though her eyes were full of excitement. Beside her Edmund grinned and nodded, a warm and approving grin that seemed to say he knew this would happen.

Then they were gone.

*

Galen felt Mortimer against him and the lump in his throat was painful. He grabbed tight hold of the man. He wouldn't let him go regardless of anything.

Unlike his first journey, he found they were being pushed together by the forces around them, rather than pulled apart as in the memory he recovered. They moved faster and faster and he could feel Mortimer shaking in his arms, but he was unable to twist to look at him. The blur of stars slowed, they became more defined and then they could see planets.

He wasn't sure what had happened last time, he couldn't remember or else he had blacked out before hitting the ground in the park and Emily finding him. Maybe he had seen planets? And now they were heading towards one. He could see ships, the deathstar of his creation, and then sky, buildings, a beach. He could see Jyn.

His heart thud in his chest. So like Emily, of course he had been correct in mistaking them. She huddled on the beach with a companion, as though shielding themselves.

And then he saw the growing blast.

Jyn looked up, her face full of confusion and then realisation. She was on her feet screaming to him but he couldn't hear anything through the bubble they found themselves in.

He reached out a hand and she reached back. Then flames rolled over them.

*

One Year Later

"There you go Veronica, everything's just fine." Mortimer patted the side of the beast and stood. She was close, but it would likely still be another day or two before she went into labour. Perhaps Jyn would be back in time to see it. She could name it, she might like that. Being on the farm seemed to bring back happy childhood memories for her - a peaceful life, she had told him.

For Mortimer it was something quite new. He was not a farmer, but he made a passable vet to their livestock. Some strange beasts, but at least they were a manageable size. Galen had jokingly suggested Bantha, which - having seen them in the tradepost - Mortimer thought would probably trample him under foot. And he hadn't been a big fan of the milk he had tried anyway. He was still concerned as to why it was blue.

But now with Veronica having her second litter since they acquired her, he felt like he was becoming a dab hand.

He was adjusting.

He was even enjoying it.

But it was true that the planet being almost all swamp and apparently very far from any reasonable trade routes - Cassian's ongoing complaint - made things difficult. For one he had been through more pairs of boots than he cared to count, the moisture getting to them, and at least two pairs had been lost in mud during the rainy season. And though it being an

insignificant and out of the way planet with only the one tradepost suited Galen, it meant that Jyn and Cassian - the only two people who knew who and where they were - could not always visit with their stories of rebellion. But it was safe, beyond notice. Galen needed it to be safe for them, and Mortimer was perfectly happy with that.

He patted Veronica again and went back to the house. Galen was already cooking dinner.

“I have word from Jyn. She and Cassian come two days from now if they can get passage from Tattooine.” His voice was light and it warmed Mortimer. He seemed almost free of the sadness that had plagued him before but even so, he was always lighter when talking of Jyn - knowing she was alive and well. He had been sad when she had left the first time, but had brightened when she returned with news that his creation had been destroyed by the Rebellion.

Mortimer didn’t pretend to understand it all. It was too vast. More than his brain could reasonably take in without going somewhat mad. So he focused on the here and now. On the fact that somehow they had skipped through an exploding planet, Jyn and Cassian in tow, to this place. That they had built a life here together that held constant wonder and interest for him. That they loved freely and happily, and often. That, perplexingly, milk was sometimes blue. And that, as Galen told him everyday - the force was with them.

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